VIRTUE IN THE NONVIOLENCE OF
WILLIAM JAMES AND GANDHI

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William James searched for a Moral Equivalent to War and M. K. Gandhi’s writings and political life provide an alternative answer: direct nonviolent contention. James posed a dilemma that war promotes many virtues considered of high value and pacifism is too often passivism. Many believe that in Gandhi’s writings nonviolence is the antithesis to violence. However, a closer examination reveals that Gandhi made a greater distinction between the virtue of courage and the vice of cowardice. Gandhi’s insistence on nonviolence is that nonviolence is the better but not the exclusive form of viable contention. The value of Gandhi’s pacifism—principled nonviolent contention—becomes clear when illuminated by his epistemology and social ethics. Recent empirical comparative research substantiates these claims.

INTRODUCTION:
Citizens are able to oust long-standing dictators with nonviolent action. The world is now observing in Tunisia, Egypt, and beyond, what many are calling nonviolent social revolutions. These revolutions are taking place with active nonviolent strategies, and regimes that have stood strong in the Arab world are crumbling. The relatively small amount of violence and killing has been committed by the state, not the protesters. Arizona Republican Senator John McCain said after talks with Arab League chief Amr Moussa:

This revolution has shown the people of the world, not just in the Arab world, that peaceful change
can come about and violence and extremism is not required in order to achieve democracy and freedom."

In summary, The explosion of joy in Tahrir Square at that moment signaled a victory for the protesters and a historic moment for Egypt, the region, and even the world. In a larger context, however, Friday 11 February 2011 also represents only "the end of the beginning." Two fundamental issues are recognized: first, large scale socio-political change is possible without resorting to (the threat of) killing if people mobilize nonviolently; and, second, this represents the beginning of a long process towards further self-governing, or what Robert Dahl refers to as what comes After the Revolution. This article argues that the form of contention does matter. Research on nonviolent contention suggests optimism rather than pessimism in viewing the long-term consequences of the largely nonviolent contestations, such as the Arab Spring.

What is required from individuals in nonviolent social revolutions and especially in the transition from violence to politics? The following will address these questions to further nonkilling scholar Glenn Paige's call "to create basic and applied theory that will guide transition from conditions of political violence to nonviolent alternatives." The focus here is on the relationships between people, not the relationship between states and citizens. Importantly, while many in conflict research focus primarily on "basic human needs," the following claims that basic human responsibilities exist as well and are equally, if not more, important. Therefore, this writing is centered in the positive peace tradition. Importantly, the following concentrates on the broader social dimensions of constructive peacebuilding and addresses John Brewer's recent perplexing statement: "To die in war is a sacrifice; to live and make peace an even greater one."

THE NATION-STATE OR THE CITIZEN?
Several debates are prevalent in discussions about the citizen and the modern nation state. One debate is the perennial political science question as to the relation between the individual and the collective. This conversation is carried in philosophy as the debate between liberals and communitarians—the right or the good. In contemporary social sciences the discussion is between agency and structure. Though oriented by the
same perennial questions, the questions are modified in international law and social justice.

The language of human rights, rather than state sovereignty, now dominates international law and the language of satisfying needs dominates social justice. The implicit question behind rights and needs is who bears the counterpart obligations or responsibilities to deliver on those rights. Or, said more succinctly, "Who must do what for whom?" Onora O'Neill reminds us that most contemporary approaches to rights and the satisfaction of human needs assume that states are the primary agents of accountability and view all other agents as secondary. The main problem with a state-centric approach to the delivery of human needs and rights is that it unburdens the private individual agent from responsibility. If the state-centric approach is accepted, then private individuals are basically free to pursue their own interests, with their primary moral responsibility simply to elect state leaders who pursue policies that work towards fulfilling human rights and needs.

What is the case if private individuals have responsibilities that exceed a strictly state-centric approach? It matters greatly whether needs and rights are postulated as negative duties (not to coerce others) or whether existing human needs and rights may impose positive obligations and responsibilities (to protect and/or aid) that go beyond the institutions of the state. This is not to suggest that how states relate to their citizens is irrelevant; rather, it is to argue that how individuals engage and interact with others is relevant.

These are difficult questions and propositions. Without lessening the importance of rights and needs, the following explores the possibility that persons have responsibilities as well as rights and needs. It examines one way of addressing the behaviors of individuals interacting with other individuals by referring to a general discussion of the topics of moral character and virtue within the branch of philosophical thought termed ethics. Briefly, to do ethics is to focus on the nature of virtue—admirable moral character—and the process or means of how one attains virtue, and what

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relationships may be required to promote moral character and virtue. If a nonviolent revolution and society relies on the virtue of nonviolence, what might this look like?

The following sections explore these difficult questions in terms of a nonviolent society. M. K. Gandhi’s response to William James and his call for a moral equivalent of war provides the basis for further exploration in the epistemology and behavior animating the ethics and virtues of nonviolence. An important distinction is discussed below: the “voluntarist” dimension of agency refers to an individual’s behaviors while the “cognitive” dimension of agency refers to an individual’s thoughts.

GANDHI’S ANSWER TO WILLIAM JAMES...AND BEYOND

Rather than focusing on the state and large-scale social systems, this section addresses ethics and both the cognitive and voluntarist dimensions of individual agency. Ethics, generally, involves both how we think and formulate answers to difficult questions—the cognitive dimension—and what social actions are employed—the voluntarist dimensions of agency. To be engaged in ethical deliberation and action is to exercise reflection, choice and power in the world. Ethics moves away from a fixed determination judgment and toward an open-ended process of reflection. The orienting assumption of this approach is that individuals are not determined by socio-historical circumstances but are always, to some degree, capable of “doing otherwise.” Both the cognitive and the voluntarist dimensions of agency are embedded in and inform the social context.

a. The Moral Equivalent of War

In 1906, William James delivered a well-known speech at Stanford University titled “The Moral Equivalent of War.” James calls war the “gory nurse” that trains men in virtues “which are absolute and permanent goods.” War builds individual character, including “order and discipline... service and devotion...” which promote the collective good over individual desires. James continues that war teaches “fidelity, cohesiveness, tenacity, heroism...and vigor.” For James, “Militarism is the great preserver of our ideals of hardihood” and he writes: “If war had ever stopped, we should have to re-invent it, on this view, to redeem life from flat denigration.”
both recognizes and honors the militaristic sentiment and the virtues that accompany the preparation and conduct of war.

However, William James considers himself a pacifist! Since he favors nonviolence, this puts him in a dilemma. He acknowledges the economic, personal, and collective costs of war; however, for James, it does no good to explain war's destructiveness and the "bestial" side of war because "the horrors make the fascination." James entered into the ethical viewpoint of military patriotism and discovers virtue and moral character. So what is James to do?

William James then explores anti-war and pacifist developments. First, he is critical of "the deficiencies in the program of pacifism" which are "all too weak and tame...[because]...the only fear they reckon with is the fear of poverty." For James, those against war, such as himself, must find an alternative to instill the virtues listed above. He states that "A permanently successful peace-economy cannot be a simple pleasure-economy" and is neither desirable nor possible. Why? For James, a life of mere leisure—which seems to be the life suggested by the proponents of pacifism of his time—without hardship, struggle, service, and sacrifice is a life that is devoid of human development to its full capacity. For James, pacifism, as he observed it practiced, was too soft and lacked adequate teaching in moral character and virtue. In other words, pacifism is too often passivism.

Second, William James is searching for a way to "inflame the civic temper" in which "the martial type of character can be bred without war." His proposed solution is to conscript the youth of the nation for a certain number of years as part of an "army enlisted against Nature." For James, this type of enlistment would build individual character while serving the collective good, teaching "toughness without callousness" and the other civic virtues of hardiness and dedication. For his part, whether or not James was convinced this would work, he was earnestly searching for The Moral Equivalent of War.

Jon Roland, in his "Introduction" to James' speech writes:
The solution to the problem remains an open question, now that “nature” is not to be regarded as an “enemy.” The real “enemy” is our own darker human nature, and no one has found a good way to oppose that without slipping into opposition to individuals or groups seen as embodying that darker nature. It would appear that the traditional militia system remains the best solution anyone has found...^*

In summary, William James recognized that aspects of the preparation and conduct of war build individual virtues that serve and sustain collective order and collective good. At the same time, James admits “…and I look forward to a future when acts of war shall be formally outlawed…” because he does recognize the horrors and destruction that war brings. Is there another answer to the moral equivalent of war, other than combating nature, which could preserve James’s nonviolent stance, build individual character, and serve the collective good?

b. M. K. Gandhi’s Nonviolent Direct Action as an Answer to William James’ Moral Equivalent of War?

M. K. Gandhi’s understanding of nonviolence is contrasted against the heroic or militaristic ethic. However, Gandhi admires the virtue of courage, which is also highly valued in the heroic or militaristic ethic. To answer this question is to explore further into virtue and social action. Alasdair MacIntyre, in After Virtue, describes the moral framework of the “heroic ethic” in which courage, loyalty to kinship ties, and sacrifice for the common collective are highly praised as virtuous actions and are best displayed in battle and confrontation. These are the same virtues that William James praises above. M. K. Gandhi also praises the heroic ethic, which helps to shed light on his perspective of nonviolence. In fact, it is crucial to understand that Gandhi’s perspective is deeply embedded in the heroic ethic and the virtue of courage. However, as we shall see, with Gandhi the heroic ethic—the voluntarist dimension of agency—undergoes modification with an emphasis on Truth—the cognitive dimension
of agency. As will become more clear, it is important to acknowledge both dimensions of human agency.

Most commonly, M. K. Gandhi’s understanding of nonviolence is contrasted against the heroic or militaristic ethic. However, Gandhi admires the virtue of courage, which is also highly valued in the heroic or militaristic ethic. In fact, Gandhi admires courage to the extent that he even “prefers violence to cowardice.” This is an important point, because Gandhi’s nonviolence is often contrasted with violence, each being at opposite ends of a continuum, such as:

\[
\text{Violence} \rightarrow \text{Nonviolence}
\]

Gandhi, however, acknowledges the possible role of physical force when he writes that “even man-slaughter may be necessary in certain cases” if a “man runs amuck and goes furiously about, sword in hand, and killing anyone….” then “taking life may be a duty.” Gandhi’s point is that other (innocent) people are important, it takes courage to take a life, and this courage is more virtuous than the cowardice of “running away and leaving dear ones unprotected.” Gandhi’s ethics at this point is better understood as embedded in the contrast between the vice of cowardice and the virtue of courage, on the following continuum:

\[
\text{Vice} / \text{Virtue}
\]

\[
\text{Cowardice} \rightarrow \text{Courage}
\]

Gandhi claims that “nonviolence is the summit of bravery…and does not permit of running away.” This is the courage of the hero who is willing to give the ultimate sacrifice. However, Gandhi goes one step further and claims that too much of the heroic ethic may be slightly misguided. The point Gandhi makes about nonviolence requiring superior courage is “…because nonviolence cannot be taught to a person who fears to die.” Gandhi’s point is that both the act of committing violence—such as taking another’s life—and nonviolence both take courage. But the act of nonviolence may take more courage. For Gandhi, “nonviolence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear” because it “is the greatest” power at the disposal of mankind. With a twist of irony, Gandhi wrote:
VIRTUE IN THE NONVIOLENCE OF WILLIAM JAMES AND GANDHI

Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for nonviolence. Violence does not mean the emancipation from fear, but combating the cause of fear. Nonviolence, on the other hand, has no cause for fear. The votary of nonviolence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear.\(^3\)

Gandhi continued by distinguishing that violence is needed for the protection of things, of possessions, while "nonviolence is needed for the protection of one's honour."

Gandhi's continuum between vice and virtue is fashioned after the heroic ethic. However, when considering nonviolence this is better modeled on the continuum below in which violence and nonviolence are not polar opposites but rather possible modes of conduct on the continuum between cowardice and courage:

**Vice / Virtue**

Cowardice ←-----------------violence----nonviolence→ Courage

Gandhi's principled nonviolence\(^3\) —chosen for ethical rather than pragmatic reasons—remains in tension with physical force, such as policing and various international peacekeeping missions. However, even though Gandhi acknowledged that policing may be necessary at times when a man "runs amuck," he was very clear that nonviolence is the preferred form of social behavior.

The principled approach to nonviolence, Gandhi argues, can answer William James' call "to inflame the civic temper as past history has inflamed the military temper"\(^3\) as was demonstrated in the salt marches of the Indian independence movement and the Nashville lunch counter sit-ins during the American civil rights movement.\(^3\) Thousands upon thousands of people were and can be mobilized for civic engagement and for positive social and political change. The examples, such as the recent nonviolent revolution in Egypt and Tunisia, the Solidarity movement in Poland, and the Apartheid movement in South Africa, are numerous. For example, numerous members of the nonviolent movement in the American South during the effort to gain greater Civil Rights recalled the spirit of courage
and civic engagement that spread among the student population. This is the voluntarist dimensions of human agency in which individuals and collectives mobilize for nonviolent social change.

c. Nonviolence and Truth: Epistemology and Behavior

The discussion above is concerned primarily with the voluntarist dimensions of agency, on the behaviors exhibited by individuals interacting with other individuals. The second dimension of agency deals with the cognitive side of the human being and with ways of understanding. Gandhi’s discussion of nonviolence that acknowledges the fundamental role of courage cannot be fully understood without reference to the virtue of Truth (Satyagraha). Nonviolence as a means to access Truth is clear in Gandhi’s writings. Nonviolence as an epistemology—“that branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope, and general basis”—is, for Gandhi, a particular stance towards knowledge that serves to foster better understanding as well as better relationships. In other words, nonviolence is consistent in both voluntarist and cognitive dimensions of human life.

For Gandhi, life is an experiment with Truth. That is, as we seek truth, we enter a process of moving toward it—a process we never cease because we never fully arrive. Because of our finitude, we must always be learning from others, including our adversaries. Truth is too big, and we are each too limited, to think we may know the truth fully. How do we arbitrate between competing conceptions of truth that arise from particular individual or cultural views? For example, how do we arbitrate between the virtues of the heroic ethic, on the one hand, and pacifism and nonviolence on the other?

Gandhi asserted that the quest for truth excludes the use of violence because violence destroys and, therefore, it may destroy an important component of truth. Human beings are not capable of knowing the absolute truth. Hence, we must never close off the possibility of learning from our
adversaries, nor must we ever take upon ourselves the absolute certainty that killing others assumes. Said another way:

A practitioner of nonviolence, while holding on to the truth as she sees it, will assume her own fallibility and give the opponent every chance to prove that her position is erroneous. The doctrine of nonviolence can thus mediate between competing visions of morality.

For Gandhi, nonviolence is a methodological imperative. Gandhi begins with the fallibility of individual human beings which includes both the cognitive and voluntarist notions of agency and considers nonviolence the best approach because "if this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes."

Nonviolence is therefore not just one virtue among several but is ultimately the means to achieve the primary virtue, truth.

To understand why Gandhi chose nonviolence it is important to return to a discussion of the virtues. What is missing in many, especially modern, accounts of virtues is that virtues are not simply along a continuum from no virtue to full virtue. A helpful guide is to return to Aristotle where virtues, such as courage, occupy a median position between vices of deficiency and excess. For example, Aristotle would model the virtue of courage as a proper balance between the vice of cowardice and the vice of foolhardiness. The virtue of courage lies between the vice of deficiency and excess of courage, as modeled below:

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When faced with a situation, there are two extremes (deficiency and excess) one can act upon. For Aristotle, we become virtuous not by acting on one extreme, but by finding an intermediate action. Therefore, we can now configure Gandhi’s view of nonviolence and violence in relation to the virtues and vices related to courage:
Virtue in the Nonviolence of William James and Gandhi

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Moral virtue has to do with feeling, choosing, and acting well. Both Gandhi and Aristotle insist that ethics is not simply a theoretical discipline but a practical and applied discipline: "we are asking what the good for human beings is not simply because we want to have knowledge, but because we will be better able to achieve our good if we develop a fuller understanding of what it is to flourish." Continuing this point, for Gandhi, it is not simply the motivations guiding the actions but the social consequences of those actions that deserve attention.

For Gandhi, violence has negative consequences for both the wielder and the receiver of violence—both suffer. Therefore Gandhi understood principled nonviolence as connecting motivation, means, and ends. Gandhi is explicit that principled nonviolence is both an individual and social virtue. Gandhi acknowledges the irony of the civility of nonviolence when he writes: "It is a matter of perennial satisfaction that I retain generally the affection and trust of those whose principles and policies I oppose." In this way, Gandhi is building a nonviolent future in the process of the revolution itself.

M. K. Gandhi admires the courage involved in nonviolence and, as we saw above, identifies a characteristic of this virtue—the willingness to suffer and sacrifice. At the same time it is not seeking martyrdom—that would be foolhardy—but holds on to principles of civic virtue and a willingness to suffer oneself rather than cause others to suffer. For Gandhi, the willingness to suffer is based upon the simple reason that in pursuing a given action, the actor pursuing it may be wrong. If these nonviolent actions are misguided or wrong, only the nonviolent actor suffers.

It is a small step, for Gandhi, to include suffering or sacrifice in the context of nonviolence, or "the ancient law of self-sacrifice." Gandhi is appealing to the consent theory of power by turning to "non-cooperation" and "civil resistance" as both the means for training in the virtue of nonviolence and for producing civil (nonviolent) outcomes. For example, the African American students participating in the nonviolent Nashville lunch counter sit-ins during the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. dramatized the violence of the Jim Crow South while displaying their own propensity...
for civil democratic behavior. Nonviolence is both a means and the ends. Nonviolence is a form of interpersonal relations based in noncompulsion “because truth cannot be written into a constitution but must be adopted voluntarily.” For Gandhi, nonviolence cannot be demanded of another. However, the effect of nonviolence as a virtue does extend beyond individual attitude to include social action. Nonviolence towards others is a methodological imperative of openness for Gandhi, even in the practice of nonviolence itself, because there is no “complete science of nonviolence.”

So how do we arbitrate between competing conceptions of moral truth that arise from particular individual or cultural views of the human good? Gandhi’s answer is to listen and respect the position and views of the other, even the adversary, allowing that one’s own position may be incorrect and may need to be modified.

d. The Application of Principled Nonviolence

M. K. Gandhi led India in her long struggle for independence from the British Empire. But Gandhi was always aware of the difficulties and paradoxes of self-rule. Gandhi was opposed to British colonial rule, however, he was clear that with the demise of the empire the struggle would not end, but really only begin. Gandhi was not the first to dream of independence. The Indian National Congress (founded in 1885) employed the term self-rule (swaraj) to designate their narrow and strategic goal of expelling the British. Gandhi cautions that “all Indians are impatient to obtain swaraj, but we are certainly not decided as to what it is.” He continues that too many believe that self-rule simply means driving the British away and seem to want “English without the Englishman.” Gandhi wants Indian self-rule, not a replication of British rule by a simple change in who is on power. Gandhi portrays Western civilization as in a state of decline due to an upsurge in self-indulgence at the cost of civic duty: “those who are in it appear to be half mad. They lack real strength and courage. They keep up their energy by intoxication.” Gandhi’s analysis is similar to William James’ complaint against pacifism; it is too often passivism. This troubles Gandhi because he believes that
colonization of the Indian peoples has been internalized willingly by the Indian population themselves. For Gandhi, self-rule requires attention to Truth and nonviolence, courageous action, governing the self and civic duty to others.\(^5\)

In summary, in the moral framework Gandhi employs, violence is not the opposite of nonviolence, rather courage is the mean with cowardice and foolhardiness at opposite ends of the spectrum. Violence and nonviolence occupy positions on the continuum, they are not polar extremes. Many view nonviolence as foolhardy. However, nonviolence, when taking an active form, is more virtuous because it requires more bravery. Accordingly, Gandhi disdains cowardice more than violence and, at the same time, views active nonviolence as requiring more courage than violence. The paramount difference for Gandhi between violence and nonviolence is that nonviolence achieves different ends than outcomes that eschew from violence (violence destroys). This brings us back to the voluntarist dimensions of agency. For example, Gandhi—evaluating the voluntarist side of agency—writes that the British have not taken India, but that the Indian population has given India to them:

I object to violence when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent. I do not believe that the killing of even every Englishman can do the slightest good to India. The millions will be just as badly off as they are today... The responsibility is more ours than that of the English for the present state of things.\(^5\)

Gandhi incorporates two ideas to account for the imperial control of India. First, Gandhi implores the population to action: the responsibility for changing the state of affairs, or unmet human needs and lack of civil rights, is at least partially on the Indian population themselves. But Gandhi is not an advocate for just any form of action, he insists on nonviolence. Second, the use of violence is only a temporary solution: the British may leave, but how will Indians self-govern? Gandhi calls on the population to exercise

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their capability to do otherwise and participate in active noncooperation with unjust laws of the British.

For Gandhi, “…things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering.” Gandhi’s guide to virtuous action is derived from the heroic ethic. However, it is Gandhi’s methodological imperative (epistemology) of reaching Truth that moves him to nonviolent social action. For Gandhi, nonviolence builds the self-rule that is necessary for the daily operation of civil society. The motivations, means and ends of active nonviolence are consistent and do not require radical reintegration and re-education as is often required, with too many tragic stories, when soldiers move from combat to civilian life (it should also be noted that nonviolent direct action does not build a military-industrial complex with its own inertia).

For Gandhi, nonviolence builds the self-rule that is necessary for the daily operation of civil society.

Howard Zinn writes that “Most men everywhere agree that they want to end war, imperialism, racism, poverty, disease and tyranny. What they disagree about is whether these expectations can be fulfilled within the old frameworks of nationalism, representative government and the profit system.” As we saw above, for Gandhi, self-rule does not rely on other institutions to bring self-rule to the people, the people to some extent must master it themselves. In fact, Zinn goes one step further in that in the pursuit of peace and justice “it is up to the citizenry” to permanently engage in a nonviolent critical relationship of “constructive dissent” with the state. But how is one to actively and perpetually engage in open nonviolent dissent?

Pitirim Sorokin’s response is that citizens need to become more prosocial and cooperative, “unselfish, creative. [As] ideally formulated in the Sermon on the Mount...in overt behavior...” Gandhi would agree with Sorokin and was deeply concerned with spiritual and religious awakening as a path towards deeper understanding of the self and the citizen’s relation to others in community that would lead to self-rule. However, given the extremes that religious expression can take, we must take caution in the character or type of religious and spiritual awakening we desire and promote. For example, modeling religious and spiritual awakening is similar to
modeling virtue—we can have “too much of a good thing.” This division appears to be, on first glance, as between the more commonly portrayed “secular” on one end and the “religious” on the other end. However, if the virtues occupy a median position between two vices, then it is not simply a matter of religious awakening. Religious awakening can become a vice of excess—commonly referred to as radical fundamentalism or extremism. Therefore, conceptualizing the secular-religious relation in terms of virtue could be modeled something like this:

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<tr>
<td>Profane</td>
<td>“Sermon on the Mount”</td>
<td>Radical extremism</td>
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If we maintain Aristotle’s virtue as a median between vices, we see that some areas may require religious invigoration while other areas may require taming religious belief. The best option for sorting this out appears to be nonviolence. Whether or not nonviolence is considered a means or both a means and an end it is internally consistent.

Is it possible to sustain nonviolent social ethics based in principles that are neither exclusively secular nor exclusively religious, but inclusive of both? Protestant theologian Paul Tillich claims that it makes no difference whether the exploration of human existence is theistic or atheistic, because it is about the proper balance between assumptions of how the world works and how the individual engages in the social world. This locates the approach, again, in social ethics.

So, nonviolence may be epistemologically and ethically consistent. But is nonviolent social action and contention effective?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF NONVIOLENCE

If we consent that active nonviolent campaigns are so far consistent with the writings of James and Gandhi do active nonviolent campaigns succeed? In other words, is the qualitative difference in approach, as outlined above and culminating in a social ethics of responsibility, worth pursuing beyond its principled virtuous high ground? Aside from virtuous action, how
effective are nonlethal strategies and tactics? How effective can nonviolent strategies and tactics really be against the massive modern state apparatus with organized military and police forces? An affirmative headline reads “Nonviolence Wins Over Terror in the 21st Century.” The section below will examine the empirical evidence of nonviolent movements and revolutionary attempts compared to revolutionary attempts and insurrections that utilize violent.

The explanation for the success of nonviolent campaigns compared to lethal campaigns is, according to Chenoweth and Stephan, mass participation. While scholars disagree as to why mass mobilization occurs, once mobilization begins a nonviolent campaign has wider appeal than a lethal campaign. Chenoweth and Stephan explain:

[R]ather than effectiveness resulting from a supposed threat of violence, nonviolent campaigns achieve success through sustained pressure derived from mass mobilization that withdraws the regime’s economic, political, social, and even military support from domestic populations and third parties.

Accordingly, nonlethal campaigns achieve higher levels of participation from the population and large-scale participation translates into tactical and strategic advantages through a massive and diverse withdrawal of regime support directed at contentious politics.

This leads to the next question. What are the relative consequences of waging violent and nonviolent campaigns in terms of greater democracy and the decreased chance of the recurrence of lethal civil conflict? Although decades of research have been conducted, much debate continues concerning the conditions under which democracies emerge. Also, scholars are beginning to study ways in which the success of violent contention have negative, perhaps unintended, impacts on the societies and polities. From the research, it appears that lethality often begets lethality in the “conflict trap” wherein the recent history of violence is one of the most important factors determining whether a country will revert to internal war. The experience of violent insurgency typically produces negative long-term economic, social, and political consequences where it occurs and imposes major public health crises, thwarts investment, and destroys vital infrastructure resulting in stunted political reliability and order.
These findings lead to several generalizations. Perhaps most important is that the nature and tactics of contention matter. Accordingly, constructing reliable, accountable and legitimate democratic institutions is less problematic when the contention has been nonviolent. Chenoweth and Stephan attribute this finding to, first, the active participation by large numbers in the process of nonlethal change and will more likely remain politically engaged after the transition and nonlethal contention encourages democratic skills. Second, successful nonlethal contention strengthens citizen’s expectations that the postconflict regime will also employ nonlethal means to achieve political order. Terry Karl argues that the opposite occurs following successful violent insurgencies: in the context of high lethality “war transitions threaten to produce failed states or democracies that are so perilous that many of their citizens long for authoritarian rule.” Finally, successful violent campaigns tend to operate by means of secrecy and martial values, leaving little room for accountability and nonlethal contention. These findings are supported by scholarship on nonviolent revolutions and recent scholarship on the (ongoing) Arab Spring.

CONCLUSION: BUILDING, NOT DESTROYING, THE FUTURE IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

This discussion began with a consideration of William James’s *Moral Equivalent of War* and the virtues of civic duty and courage promoted in preparations and times of war. It is argued above that Gandhi gives sufficient response to James’ call for a *Moral Equivalent of War* in that nonviolent action: 1) nonviolent action promotes the virtues—such as courage, discipline, service to the community, etc—that war promotes; 2) nonviolent action promotes greater virtue than war because nonviolent action actually requires *more* courage than violence and does not destroy others; 3) nonviolence is the preferred form of social action because if the nonviolent actor is wrong, she does not harm others; and, 4) nonviolence is the preferred methodological approach because Truth is not destroyed.
with nonviolence. The unity of the epistemological and ethical insights of nonviolent action offers some basic guidelines for critical self-assessment as well as evaluation of social action.

It is here that individuals are endowed not only with rights and needs but also with the responsibility of self-governance. However, self-governance goes beyond needs to include ways in which individuals participate in social and political life. With increased participation comes increased responsibility. Glenn Paige writes: “On the heels of the democratic era came post modern concern for broad participation in the shaping and sharing of all values, not just power or wealth. The world wide devotion to respect, self respect and respect for others supports nonkilling.” Gandhi’s insight is to create a fluid connection between them with the principled approach to nonviolence and incorporates the ethics of responsibility in resolving conflict. Gandhi explains: “Nonviolence is ‘not a resignation from all real fighting against wickedness.’ On the contrary, the nonviolence of my conception is a more active and real fight against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness.”

Reinhold Niebuhr described Gandhi’s approach as “most undeniably nonviolent resistance rather than non-resistance.” This is important because, although both may use forms of coercion, the means and ends are not identical. Niebuhr explains that violent coercion is distinguished both in its intentions and consequences of destruction from those of nonviolent resistance because nonviolent resistance does not intend destruction nor are the consequences as destructive. This pacifism is not passivism.

Turning again to the American Civil Rights Movement, using a nonviolent human responsibilities framework illuminates a constellation of dimensions that do not appear in an approach that concentrates exclusively on a rights and needs framework. The story of the Civil Rights Movement is much more than a history of legal developments, civil war, and Supreme Court cases. First, the organizers were adamant that the civility in recognizing justice, such as the ethics of responsibility in human relationships, be presented to all, not just those whom they loved. The movement was
not designed to replace or defeat the opponents, but to live in society with the opponents and create a future society of inclusion. The student participants were using principled nonviolence to dramatize the injustice of the separate but equal laws and norms of the American South. The students acknowledged the possibility of sacrifice and were willing to suffer. They used their agency to bring change. They dramatized both the injustice of the system and their capability of courageously participating responsibly in civil society. Ackerman and Duvall summarize Twentieth-Century nonviolent movements as teaching "individuals how to assume responsibility for their own action and make decisions about the substance of goals and the process of reaching them." These individuals were practicing democratic (and Gandhian) virtues and building civil society during the process of revolution.

The point is that the new (political) society is built in the process of change. Nonviolent social mobilization, such as those inspired and led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and M.K. Gandhi, can and have inflamed the civic spirit and can bring constructive and lasting change. Nonviolence provides a template of social action that is guided by and consistent with motivations, means, and ends. Nonviolence (and other forms of non-exploitation) is consistent with an ethics of responsibility that takes seriously social action and influence upon others. This addresses the voluntarist dimensions of agency. However, for Gandhi, and others, the cognitive dimensions of agency must also be addressed to change general assumptions, especially those assumptions that support violence.

Not only is it ethically appropriate, it is also realistic and pragmatic to pursue nonviolent action. Gene Sharp observes: "As recent as 1980, it was to most people unthinkable that nonviolent struggle—or people's power—would within a decade be recognized as a major force shaping the course of politics throughout the world" (1989: 4). Importantly, we can review the history of political thought to recover nonviolent insights. For example, in Plato is the ethical ideal of "non-injury"; in Plutarch, a "resort to the knife...shows a lack of skill...by the statesmen..."; and, in Mencius, "he who, using force, make a pretense at virtue is a tyrant..." Similar to several contemporary anthropological accounts, both violence and nonviolence are social constructions and we can read the classics of political philosophy in different ways, just as we can (re)construct society and
social relations in different ways: “Classical texts supportive of violence can be reinterpreted to subtract lethality [and therefore]. . . retain and advance nonkilling insights.”

Gandhi explicitly and implicitly challenges us to reevaluate our assumptions about violence. The assumptions too many hold is that violence is not only inevitable, but that it is desirable as well. As one nonviolent advocate writes about the use of force to achieve political ends: “It is as if medical scientists approached cancer as incurable and socially desirable.” He continues, the solution is not “to apply more disease. More Cancer will not cure cancer.”

For Gandhi, nonviolence maintains the consistency between motivations, means, and ends and builds democratic governance in the process of contention. To repeat: James is critical of “the deficiencies in the program of pacifism” which are “all too weak and tame... [because]... the only fear they reckon with is the fear of poverty.” For James, those against war, such as himself, must find an alternative to instill the virtues listed above. He states that “A permanently successful peace-economy cannot be a simple pleasure-economy” and is neither desirable nor possible. Why? For James, a life of mere leisure—which seems to be the life suggested by the proponents of pacifism of his time—without hardship, struggle, service, and sacrifice is a life that is devoid of human development to its full capacity. For James, pacifism, as he observed it practiced, was too soft and lacked adequate teaching in moral character and virtue. In other words, pacifism is too often passivism. Gandhi’s nonviolence recognizes principled civil dissent against injustice and the misuse of power and upholds the right to civil disobedience as an integral part of active democratic participation and governance. Nonviolence resists perfection, certainty, and even closure, and “thus invites an attitude of open-mindedness and critical reflection.” Here we find William James’ moral equivalent of war!
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Notes

1. Numerous activists in these revolutions have credited Gene Sharp’s work on nonviolent activism as providing conceptual scaffolding and useful tactics and strategies.


6. See Glenn Paige, “Nonviolent Political Science,” *Social Alternatives*, 1, 6/7 (June 1980): 104-112. Similar questions have been raised by John W. Burton and Johann Galtung, both of whom Glenn Paige was well aware.


8. Johan Galtung, in *50 Years: 100 Peace and Conflict Perspectives*, TRANSCEND University Press, (www.transcend.org/tup) 2008, distinguished between “negative peace” which is the absence of overt violence and advocated by anti-war sentiment while “positive peace” deals with the construction of peaceful relations and the alleviation of oppression and injustice.


16. This is the approach to social order presented by Adam Smith: allow complete freedom to atomistic individuals and social order will emerge spontaneously. The critique of this position is that Smith turns a vice—individual narcissism—into a virtue.


19. For a general overview of different topics that include ethics, virtue and moral character, see the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* available online at http://www.plato.stanford.edu/


22. For a copy of the now famous speech, see http://www.constitution.org/wj/meow.htm.

23. Italics in original manuscript.

24. See John Roland, “Introduction to The Moral Equivalent of War” at
25. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984, 2nd ed.). For MacIntyre, we can only understand virtues in their relation to the community in which they are embedded. For a contrasting view, see John Rawls and Michael Nozick.

26. The possible exception may be the virtue of loyalty to kinship, since Gandhi extended kinship to include all of humanity (and all living things).

32. *Harijan*, September 1, 1940.
34. Robert Burrowes, in his study of nonviolence, separated nonviolence in typological terms as either pragmatic or principled. Burrowes summarizes: “Practitioners of *pragmatic* nonviolence believe it to be the most effective method available in the circumstances. They view conflict as a relationship between antagonists with incompatible interests: their goal is to defeat the opponent and, if this entails any suffering (short of physical injury), to inflict that suffering upon the opponent. Practitioners of *principled* nonviolence choose it for ethical reasons and believe in the unity of means and ends. They view the opponent as a partner in the struggle to satisfy the needs of all; if anyone suffers, it is the practitioner of nonviolence. More fundamentally, this practitioner may view nonviolence as a way of life.” (1996, 99)

36. See Ackerman and Duvall for numerous other examples.
37. Personal conversation with Professor Bruce Busching, former member of the Student Nonviolent Committee (SNC), summer 2010.
40. For a similar and expanded argument, see Ted Grimsrud, “Pacifism and
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46. For an overview, see “Aristotle’s Ethics” in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* available online at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/.

47. *Young India*, March 17, 1927.


52. In fact, evidence from conflicting parties suggests that neither side is completely right nor completely wrong, the solution to the conflict is to be decided in the creative act of the two parties envisioning a future that neither anticipated. See John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*


57. Gandhi, Young India, May 21, 1925.
58. Gandhi, Young India, November 4, 1931.
59. For further discussion, see Richard Rubenstein, Reasons to Kill: Why Americans Choose War (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011).
63. Prosocial is a relatively recent term (it was not used by Sorokin) utilized by social scientists to denote “altruistic” or “selfless” attitude and behaviors that promote the common good and serve the greater social collective, usually at some cost to the individual.
70. See, for example, Charles Larmore, Patterns of Moral Complexity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).


84. Paige, *Nonkilling Global Political Science,* 117.

85. Gandhi, *Young India,* October 8, 1925.


